XIII

A BILL TO AMEND THE MADRAS VILLAGE COURTS ACT.

Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—" I move for leave to introduce a Bill to amend the Madras Village Courts Act."

Mr. P. ANJANEYULU :—" I second it."

The motion was put and adopted.

XIV

MOTIONS ON MATTERS OF GENERAL PUBLIC INTEREST.

COMMITTEE TO ENQUIRE INTO THE GRIEVANCES OF NON-GAZETTED OFFICERS.

* Rao Bahadur K. SITARAMA REDDI :—" I have made a speech the other day. If you have no objection I will refer to one or two points more."

* The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" I have no objection if the House has no objection. I wish to know whether the House is in a mood to allow the hon. Member who moved this resolution[a] a chance to speak again."

(As the House signified its assent the Mover was allowed to continue.)

* Rao Bahadur K. SITARAMA REDDI :—" I thank the House for giving me this concession. It seems to me that it is the lot of this resolution to be always reached late in the day. The other day it was reached at 4–45 and to-day it is 4–20. Since the last sitting of this Council a conference of the Non-gazetted Officers' Association was held at Trichinopoly and it has sent me a copy of the resolutions passed at the conference. My hon. Friend, Mr. S. Arpudaswami Udayar, my learned friend here, was president of that conference and I am sure he will guide the deliberations here also in redressing the grievances of the non-gazetted officers. One aspect of the question which appeals to me most is, I think, their request that the pension system should be replaced by contributory provident fund system like the one obtaining in the State Railways. This provident fund system obtains in the local boards and I see that the local board servants prefer it to the pension system. If a man retires or dies after putting in some years of service, he may not be entitled to any pension, but the provident fund will provide for his heirs, the widow or children with something to live upon for some time. I do not want to make any further speech upon this. I hope this House will pass this resolution unanimously. It is after all a modest request to appoint a committee of some Members of this House, of some officials of Government, and representatives of the association. The committee may decide one way or the other. A body which is 33,000 strong is certainly a body whose grievances require some investigation. With these few words, I beg leave to move this resolution."

4–30 p.m. At this stage the hon. the Deputy President took the chair.

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a This resolution was under the consideration of the Council at the time of adjournment on 24th August 1927—

" That this Council recommends tothe Government that a committee consisting of two officers of Government, two Members of the Legislative Council and two representatives of the non-gazetted services chosen by the Non-gazetted Government Officers' Association, Madras, be appointed to inquire into and report on the grievances and demands of the non-gazetted officers."

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*Mr. K. R. Karant :—" Madam, I beg to move an amendment to the resolution. My amendment stands thus :

'*For all the words coming after the words " consisting of " in line 2, substitute the words " official and non-official Members of this Council elected by the Council be appointed to enquire into and report on the grievances of the non-gazetted and menial services of the Government and also the possibility of affording relief to them by effecting retrenchment in the number, pay and allowances of the services, gazetted and non-gazetted, the Committee having power to co-opt a member or members of the services concerned for the purposes of the enquiry.*" '

" And the resolution as amended, if my amendment is passed, would read thus :

'*This Council recommends to the Government that a committee consisting of official and non-official members of this Council elected by the Council be appointed to enquire into and report on the grievances of the non-gazetted and menial services of the Government and also the possibility of affording relief to them by effecting retrenchment in the number, pay and allowances of the services, gazetted and non-gazetted, the Committee having power to co-opt a member or members of the services concerned for the purposes of the enquiry.*'

" In proposing this amendment, I would say that it has been always said whenever a committee of this sort was asked that there were no funds, and consequently that some sort of retrenchment was absolutely necessary in the higher services. I am not against the resolution as it was moved by the hon. the Mover. Whether my amendment is carried or not, I hope this House will be one in giving some sort of relief to the non-gazetted officers. As I do not wish to speak again, I shall briefly state the reasons for my amendment and say a few words on the resolution put forward by the hon. the Mover. I might state the history of this question, to those at least who are new to this Council, in a few words. The pay of the clerks, who form the chief body of the non-gazetted officers, was first of all fixed in 1859 at Rs. 15 and Rs. 12 on an investigation made under orders of Government by one Mr. Pelly. Then, later on, we find that even the Board of Revenue stated that Rs. 15, the pay which obtained in later years, was hardly enough, and representations were made to the Government. Then, we come to the war years when some allowances were given up to Rs. 6. In 1920 a committee was appointed by the Government called the 'Salaries Committee' which made a report. Now, very many objections have been taken to this report, and I shall refer to them briefly some time later. The Salaries Committee report, so far as the clerks were concerned, suggested a minimum starting pay of Rs. 30 per mensem in the mufassal and Rs. 35 in the city of Madras. Then, there was also a later report of Mr. Knapp, and then we find in the year 1921 a resolution moved in the Council which was originally made by a non-official Member to which an amendment was made by a Member of Government, the hon. Mr. Todhunter. The resolution as carried by the Council unanimously on the 16th of February 1921 was this :

'That this Co ncil recommends to the Government that a committee of this Council be appointed, representative so far as possible of all the interests concerned, to scrutinize the proposals for the revision of salaries of non-gazetted officers which have been submitted to the Government of India and to make recommendations to the Government regarding them and the

village officers and regarding the provision of any further funds, the voting of which may be involved by their adoption, the committee to be appointed and to commence its sittings at once and to make recommendations or at least an interim report within such time as may be fixed having regard to the dates appointed for the consideration of the budget.'

"Now, a committee was appointed, the report of which is before me and in a few days after their appointment, by the end of the month of February 1921, they had practically made their report. But I would submit to the House that they themselves called the report an interim report. They said they could not go at length into the various grievances, and they suggested that instead of the minimum starting pay of Rs. 30 and Rs. 35 which was originally proposed by the Salaries Committee, it might be Rs. 35 and Rs. 40 respectively. But I would refer this hon. House to a few observations made by some members of that committee. One of the members, Dr. Gilbert Slater, said :

'When first a clerk enters the services as a lad from school at Rs. 30 per mensem or Rs. 35 per mensem, he is comparatively well off, and can afford to help his parents if he lives at home. It is later, at about the age of 30 and onwards, when he has a family of his own to support, that the pinch comes. I would therefore rather use such financial resources as are available for increased salaries to improve the pay of the middle-aged men, than to increase initial salaries.'

"The hon. Mr. M. D. Devadoss said as follows :—

'The plea of want of funds is no justification for refusing the very reasonable demands of the non-gazetted services. Funds could be found by practising the strictest economy and by retrenchment wherever possible. Without affecting efficiency, several highly paid offices and departments could be abolished and thereby considerable saving could be effected.'

"There are also other opinions, but I do not wish to take the time of this House.

"Then, again, the question came up on the 1st April 1925 on a resolution which was made by the hon. Member Mr. R. Srinivasa Ayyangar, and that resolution also was passed by this House. But the Government did not appoint any committee.

"Now, I shall first state the chief grievances of the non-gazetted officers. There are very many grievances put forward by them. But, so far as I am concerned, I consider that the grievances put forward in respect of those officers who get less than Rs. 80 or Rs. 100 are of a very urgent nature, and I do not feel that there is very much need for helping those who get Rs. 80 or Rs. 100 or more. Then, there are two classes of servants in this category of people below Rs. 80, namely, clerks who get Rs. 35 with an annual increment of Rs. 1-8-0 up to Rs. 50 and then rising by Re. 1 annually to Rs. 60 and the menial servants, the peons and others in offices who get Rs. 12 to Rs. 18. Now, one of the grievances of the non-gazetted officers is that in recommending those salaries the Salaries Committee have not properly gone into the matter. Their first objection is that no examination of witnesses was made except some four or five persons who were questioned as regards rents in Madras. Therefore, their grievance is a legitimate one, viz., that any committee of enquiry should take evidence tendered before them, that family budgets should be examined, and that it is very necessary to hear what the affected people have to say on the matter. A very similar principle was adopted so far as the Public Services Commission and the Lee Commission that were appointed later on were concerned. In those cases, persons in the services concerned were examined, and there is no reason why these non-gazetted officers should be treated in a different way.

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"Then, the next objection is that the Salaries Committee took as the basis Rs. 15 which was paid in the year 1890, which as I said, was fixed in 1859. But the Committee took Rs. 15 as the standard for the decade 1890 to 1900 and then took account of the rise in prices since then till the year 1919 and found that prices rose in the ratio of 100 to 200 and odd. Therefore, they were for doubling the original salary of Rs. 15 in the case of clerks, and in the case of peons from Rs. 6 which was then current to Rs. 12. Now, in these cases, the chief point the non-gazetted officers make out, one which seems to me to be a very reasonable one, is that they should not have started with the assumption that the pay of Rs. 15 and Rs. 6 which were paid in the decade 1890–1900 was sufficient for their needs, whereas it was not actually so. On the other hand, if you are to make a proper calculation, you must take the prices in the year 1859 when that pay of Rs. 15 and Rs. 6 was fixed, and then raise those salaries according to the rise in prices. We find that prices have risen more than three times, from 1859 to 1919. Therefore, their salaries should be multiplied at least by three and not by two.

"Then, a very curious way in which estimates have been made by the Salaries Committee is that estimates for food were taken from the Jail Code and the Famine Code. I would submit that this is rather a very unfair way of estimating what would be necessary to make two ends meet for these persons.

"Now, I would also submit that there can be no two opinions on this matter, that the salary paid to these persons is hardly sufficient to maintain them, and that some sort of help should be given to them I quite understand, though we have got a release of provincial contributions now, that everything out of that should not go for the salaries. But, all the same, I would submit that the old argument that there were no funds should not stand in the way, and though we may not be able to come up to the expectations of these officers —they put the minimum at Rs. 70 which I myself think is rather too high— there is no doubt that some sort of relief should be given. I have looked into the budgets of the Bombay and Bengal Governments for the year 1926–27, and I find that for similar classes of persons higher salaries are given; at least in the case of peons I find Rs. 20 is the maximum in Bombay whereas we give only Rs. 18, and in Bengal it is Rs. 22. Taking the all-India services and looking at the Postal department and the High Court and some municipalities, one will find that the salary which is given to a clerk or a peon in the service of the Madras Government is not certainly not so much as obtains in those quarters."

*Mr. R. Srinivasa Ayyangar :—"I have great pleasure in seconding this amendment. About two years ago, I had the honour and privilege of moving an identical resolution on the floor of this House, and, for the information of new members, I may state that not withstanding the opposition of the then Finance Member, Mr. R. A. Graham, it was carried by this House by a large majority. As the question has been discussed threadbare on the floor of this House, I have no desire to traverse the ground covered by the previous speakers. But I should like, with your permission, Sir, to solicit the attention of this House to what the then Finance Member, Mr. Graham, said. This is what he said :

'I do not want to be unsympathetic, and the Government do not want to lay themselves open to a charge of underpaying their servants. I think, however, that the remuneration offered by the Government compares favourably on the whole with that offered by private persons or

business men for similar service; and I do not think it would be right for the Government to pay much more than what such service can command. They are willing to accept any reasonable suggestion and will of course be the more ready to improve the position of the non-gazetted services if they feel that it is the unanimous opinion of the Council that that is a proper object on which to spend money, if money is available.'

"That money is now available in some shape or form cannot be gainsaid, and the object of my hon. Friend, the Mover, in bringing this resolution before the Council is to impress upon the Government the strength and the volume of public opinion in favour of a resolution of this character. Therefore, it is our desire that this question should be made a live question so as to make the Government realize the fact that the House is really sincere about it and is anxious that the pay and prospects of the non-gazetted officers ought to be bettered. It is in that light and in that spirit I see this resolution brought forward by my hon. Friend the Mover. We want that this question should be satisfactorily solved. It is not that the Government is asked to commit itself to any definite action. It is not asking the Government to at once throw open its treasury and then disgorge the money by paying large amounts to these low-paid and at the same time overworked non-gazetted officers.
4-45 p.m. All that it seeks is—and the request is very modest—that a committee be constituted to go into the question. Now, all that the then Finance Member said in connexion with this question was that the Government would be willing to accept any reasonable suggestion. The committee will be the proper body before which any reasonable suggestion can be made and it is only for the purpose of enabling us and enabling other persons interested in the betterment of the condition of the non-gazetted officers that we ask the Government to constitute a committee. Because a committee will be the proper forum for the purpose, being clothed with the necessary powers and competent to receive, to consider, and, if necessary, to act upon any reasonable suggestions that may be placed before it. Therefore I have very great pleasure in giving my support to this amendment."

The hon. the DEPUTY PRESIDENT:—"Now, the question before the House is that the resolution of Rao Bahadur K. Sitarama Reddiyar be amended as follows:—

'*For all the words coming after the words "consisting of" in line 2 substitute the words "official and non-official members of this Council elected by the Council to enquire into and report on the grievances of the non-gazetted and menial services of the Government and also the possibility of affording relief to them by effecting retrenchment in the number, pay and allowances of the services, gazetted and non-gazetted, the committee having power to co-opt a member or members of the services concerned for the purposes of the enquiry.*'"

* Mr. S. ARPUDASWAMI UDAYAR:—"Deputy President, Madam, I have very great pleasure in supporting this amendment. I know that the members of the non-gazetted services would have no objection whatever to any method which this committee might resort to for giving them relief. My hon. Friend has said 'by effecting retrenchment.' In fact, it was the great disparity between the scales proposed for the two services that suggested the remedy now repeated by my friend of 'effecting retrenchment'. Again, it was the great disparity in the scales of these gazetted and non-gazetted services that was partly responsible for a great deal of heart-burning. Because in this country social distinctions are based on caste we find that members of the gazetted and non-gazetted services are recruited from the same castes; they

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have the same social obligation, the same social standard to keep up, the same ceremonies to perform, the same expenses to incur in connexion with marriages, etc. Now, when the scales of pay of the gazetted services were increased, it was done very liberally and even more than liberally, whereas the Committee that sat to investigate the question of increasing the salaries of these non-gazetted services, went through their work in a hurry—one of the members of the Committee, Diwan Bahadur M. Ramachandra Rao himself complained of the haste with which very many points were discussed and considered and of the fact that much information that was indispensable for the proper discussion of the various points raised were not forthcoming and therefore it did not satisfy anybody. So, whether we find funds by effecting retrenchment or by utilization of a portion of the financial relief now granted to us, whatever be the source, it is very necessary to afford the non-gazetted officers the much-needed relief. All that these non-gazetted officers ask for is that their most pressing needs, especially as my hon. Friend Mr. Karant pointed out, the increase in the pay of the lower division clerks and the menials, should be met. The initial pay of the officers and the scale of increments should be liberally revised. There is no doubt that prices have gone up and it is an accepted fact. But what is not very carefully considered is that side by side with the rise in prices many other things have also risen. For instance, the school fees paid by these men for their girls and boys, and the price at which the school books, etc., are selling have increased enormously, also house rents, wages to servants, etc. In very many such ways, the lower division clerks especially are subjected to very great inconvenience, nay, to positive hardship. I find that even the members of the Civil Service are showing their sympathy to the non-gazetted officers. It is really a sign of the times that popular Collectors like Mr. Ellis and Mr. Dutt of Trichinopoly open conferences of these non-gazetted services and advise the members to carry on their agitation constitutionally. The very fact that the agitation of these lower services is constitutional and the constitutional aspect of it has been appreciated and encouraged by popular Collectors shows that their grievances are real and certainly not imaginary.

"Again, I may bring to the notice of the House the fact that the non-gazetted services do a sort of work which is to be appreciated by the House. In one sense I may call these services the steel-frame of the country, because it is on the laborious work that they are doing, dealing with records very carefully, preparing notes by reading several documents, etc., that it is possible for the superior officers to pass orders. They largely base their decisions upon them. Considering the very nature and value of the work done by these officers, it is only fair and equitable that their most real grievances should be gone into without any further delay by the committee proposed by my hon. Friend, the Mover of the resolution, in accordance with the amendment proposed by my hon. Friend from South Kanara. It is not necessary for me to go into further details. I will conclude with drawing the attention of my hon. Friends to the reply made by the hon. Mr. Graham who was the Finance Member at the time, to the Member for the University and others who championed the cause of the non-gazetted services. I am quoting from memory. He said that if each member of the non-gazetted services was to be given an additional salary of Rs. 5, the amount needed would come to Rs. 20 lakhs or so. Well, I think that by effecting retrenchment and by other means it

should be possible for us to find the money required for redressing the grievances of these non-gazetted services, especially of the lower division clerks and menial servants."

Mr. A. Kaleswara Rao :—" Madam, I beg to support the amendment of my hon. Friend, Mr. Karant. I do not want to repeat the various arguments advanced by my previous speakers in support of the amendment. The grievances of the non-gazetted officers and the menial servants are real. They are low-paid men and the money value of their pay has been decreasing as the prices of food-stuffs, etc., were increasing year after year. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that a committee should go into the whole question very carefully and report to the Government so that they may do whatever possible under the circumstances.

" I support this amendment in preference to the original proposition because, the amendment is more comprehensive in that it deals with the grievances not only of the non-gazetted officers but also of the menial servants of the Government. The original proposition simply refers to the grievances and demands of the non-gazetted officers. It leaves out of consideration the cases of peons, daffadars, process-servers, amins, copyists, attenders, etc., whereas the amendment includes them all. The menial servants are worse off than the higher officers among the non-gazetted services. That is one reason why I support the amendment.

" The other reason why I support the amendment is that it proposes to effect retrenchment if necessary in the number, pay and allowances of the services, gazetted and non-gazetted and gives power to the committee to co-opt members of the services themselves to this committee. Therefore in every way the amendment seems to be better than the original motion, although we all sympathise with the object of it. I suppose there will not be any difference of opinion about it. The committee will report and then we will have to see how best to give effect to its recommendations. Therefore I heartily support the amendment."

* Mr. C. Ramasomayajulu :—" Madam, I support the amendment of Mr. Karant for the reason that it gives to the committee of enquiry a status much higher than that granted to it by the original resolution. I no doubt perceive one difference in the constitution of the committee as proposed in the original resolution and as proposed in the amendment. In the constitution of the committee as per amendment, representatives of the Non-Gazetted Officers' Association have no place. But I believe that in the practical working out of the matter that omission would not in any way materially affect the merits of the enquiry. Because, naturally the persons who are well-versed in these matters will certainly be asked to give evidence before the committee. Further, it might be that the members of the Association may not, after all, be very willing to serve as members of the committee, particularly because the committee has been empowered to suggest retrenchment in the gazetted services also. In these peculiar circumstances, it might be that the members of the Association may not be willing to serve on the committee conducting an enquiry which would naturally affect the vested rights of their superiors."

The hon. the Deputy President :—" Is the hon. Member supporting Mr. Karant's amendment ?"

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Mr. C. RAMASOMAYAJULU :—" Yes, Madam. I was saying that the omission of the non-gazetted officers in the amendment does not in any way materially affect the working of the committee. On the other hand it adds to the prestige of the committee, because the committee will be composed of official and non-official members of this Council. There is also power to co-opt a number of members from the non-gazetted services. This co-option will be naturally from the members who are aged in service. Therefore, as the previous speaker has put it, the amendment of Mr. Karant is more comprehensive than the original resolution and I hope that it will be accepted by the House and the grievances of these loyal servants of the Government will be redressed."

The hon. the DEPUTY PRESIDENT :—" I hope the House is ready for the question."

The amendment was put and carried.

The House adjourned to meet again at 11 a.m. the next day.

R. V. KRISHNA AYYAR,
Secretary to the Legislative Council.

APPENDIX I.

[Vide answer to question No. 716 asked by Muhammad Khadir Mohidin Sahib Bahadur at the meeting of the Legislative Council held on the 20th October 1927, page 258 supra.]

Year.	Sanctioned strength.	Brahmans.		Non-Brahmans.		Muhammadans.		Indian Christians.		Vacant.	
		Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.
Guntur.											
1925	216	123	57·00	55	25·40	38	17 60	..	..	..	..
1926	218	121	55·50	57	26·40	38	17·40	..	..	2	0·90
1927	226	121	53·60	58	25·60	44	19·50	1	0·44	2	0·88
Nellore.											
1925	126	71	56·00	29	23·00	19	15·00	5	4·00	2	1·60
1926	126	72	57·00	29	23·00	19	15·00	6	5·00	..	..
1927	126	72	57·00	29	23 00	19	15·00	6	5·00	..	..
Chittoor.											
1925	134	63	47·00	55	41 00	12	9·00	3	2·20	1	0·70
1926	134	63	47·00	54	40·00	12	9 00	4	3·00	1	0·70
1927	134	59	44·00	50	37·00	13	9·70	4	3·00	a8	6·00

a Kept vacant under High Court's orders.